

WEMBLEY URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

*Medical Officer of Health,
for the year 1896.*

HARROW:

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TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS
OF THE
WEMBLEY URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to submit to you my Annual Report on the Health and Sanitary condition of the Urban District of Wembley for the year 1896.

I will commence, as last year, by giving you the population of the District, and I propose, as there was no very marked increase in the number of residents in 1896, to give the same figures.

POPULATION IN 1896.

Just a year ago I took a careful census of the Wembley Ward and found the total was 3,640. The estimated population of Kingsbury Ward is 700, making a grand total of 4,340 for the whole district.

OF THE HAMLETS OF THE WEMBLEY WARD.

It may interest you to know that, with regard to the Wembley Ward, the population of Wembley proper was 1,256

that for Sudbury being	925
for Alperton	778
for East Lane	546
for Preston and Kingsbury			135

There are 1,745 males, 1,895 females, the excess in females in Sudbury and Wembley being accounted for by the Sudbury Orphan Home and the servant population.

AREA.

The area of the district is

Wembley,	4,282 acres.
Kingsbury,	1,768 „

6,050 acres.

NEW BUILDINGS.

Very few new houses were built, finished, and occupied during 1896.

VITAL STATISTICS. DEATH-RATE FOR KINGSBURY AND WEMBLEY WARDS.

In the year 1896, 28 deaths were registered as occurring in the Wembley Ward and 11 deaths in the Kingsbury Ward, making 39 deaths altogether for the whole district.

Taking the Wards separately we have the death-rate of the Kingsbury Ward at 15·7, while that for the Wembley Ward is at the extraordinary low figure of 7·6 per thousand.

In order to be on the safe side I would remind you that I am taking the population as at the beginning of last year, so that you will see that we at Wembley have an even lower mortality than some of our neighbours, who justly pride themselves on the salubrity of their several districts.

It would not be fair to draw conclusions too harshly with regard to Kingsbury's higher mortality, because from a statistical point of view no reliable facts can be obtained from so small a population, but taking the two Wards together the death-rate is only 8·9 per 1,000—*i.e.*, 39 deaths in a population of 4,340.

INFANTILE MORTALITY.

Out of these 39 deaths I find that no less than 16 were those of infants under 18 months old; deducting the 16, and imagining the remaining 23 were all adults, our adult death-rate would be at the rate of 5 per 1,000.

LOW DEATH-RATE OF THE HARROW DISTRICT OF MIDDLESEX.

I am under the impression that when the Medical Officer for the County Council receives the returns from the different Health Officers he will notice a remarkably low death-rate for this part of Middlesex.

BIRTH-RATE.

If the death-rate for this district was low in 1896, the birth-rate certainly was not. There were 119 births registered, 67 boys and 54 girls, making a birth-rate of 27·4 per 1,000.

IN THE WEMBLEY WARD.

There were 94 births in the Wembley Ward, 52 boys, 42 girls, the birth-rate being 25·8 per 1,000.

IN THE KINGSBURY WARD.

There were 25 births in the Kingsbury Ward, 13 boys, 12 girls—35·7 per 1,000.

CAUSES OF INFANTILE MORTALITY.

I referred to the loss of 16 infants, and I find their deaths resulted from a variety of causes, bronchitis, convulsions, whooping-cough, teething, measles, meningitis, pneumonia, and several from premature birth and congenital debility.

AN INCUBATOR AS A PARTIAL REMEDY.

I was glad to notice that the Medical Officers of Health for Harrow and Wealdstone advocated the use of an incubator for those born prematurely and debilitated from birth, and I trust whenever one is set up our District may have access to it. Visitors to Paris can see for themselves at a large Maternity Charity, to which the public are admitted, a number of these puny infants being reared in an incubator, and daily improving by this method; but then in France a high birth-rate is considered most desirable, and every effort is made to rear all infants born alive, however heavily handicapped they may be at the start.

It is satisfactory to notice that mothers are getting less ignorant in the matter of the artificial feeding of infants and the hygienic management of the home generally, and this, no doubt, is partially due to the gradual dissemination of knowledge by lectures and nursing societies.

OTHER CAUSES OF DEATH.

Only one death from cancer is registered, several from apoplexy, decay of nature, locomotor ataxia, Bright's disease, phthisis, and other causes.

FATALITY AT THE HARROW SCHOOL SWIMMING BATH.

One fatal case occurred at the Harrow School Swimming Bath in the Pinner Road, and illustrates the danger of bathing after a heavy meal, the death being certified, after a post mortem examination, as due to syncope and failure of heart's action arising from an over-distended stomach.

CHRONIC ALCOHOLISM AS A CONTRIBUTORY CAUSE OF DEATH.

One certificate of death has the term *chronic alcoholism* as a contributory cause of death, and as I believe that others were indirectly due to this cause during this past year I should fail in my duty if I did not draw your attention to the matter. Of course I do not assert that as a neighbourhood we are worse or even as bad as other localities that one is acquainted with, but I *do* know that a greater quantity of alcohol is consumed in our district than is conducive to good health.

What I notice particularly is the tendency to take the more ardent spirits, as an ordinary beverage, among *junior* men, who, if they realised the possible hereditary predisposition latent in themselves in a small percentage of cases and the danger of subsequent transmission to their own children, would, I feel sure, take, if any intoxicant, a much less potent fluid. I am not yet prepared, as a number of my professional brethren are, to exclude the use of alcohol as a medicine, or even generally as a food accessory, but I regard it as next to criminal to allow or encourage the use of any intoxicant to young people and especially to growing children, and am well assured that no thoroughly healthy adult, even in this artificial age, needs, or should take, as a matter of habit and routine, any form of stimulant.

My plea on the score of health, therefore, is really for much stricter moderation in the use of alcohol.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

We have again to note the comparatively few cases of Infectious Disease in the district, and there was no epidemic in 1896, excepting perhaps Whooping Cough. Influenza is getting less severe in type and less harmful in its results.

SCARLATINA.

Throughout the year fifteen cases of Scarlatina in seven houses were notified—fourteen from Wembley, one only from Kingsbury. All the houses were immediately visited by myself and the Sanitary Inspector, and all precautions taken as to isolation, the origin in a few cases ascertained and the places thoroughly disinfected afterwards. Two of the cases were removed to the Isolation Hospital at Willesden.

TYPHOID.

One case of Typhoid from Wembley, of a very mild character.

DIPHTHERIA.

Again this year no notification of Diphtheria from the Wembley Ward, and only one from Kingsbury. A remarkable immunity from so large an area, especially when we consider that the disease has been prevalent in London and in places much nearer to us.

I think it should be more generally known that with regard to the anti-toxin treatment the injections should be given if possible before the third day to be of real service. This treatment seldom fails to effect a cure when this is done. The examination of the membrane microscopically should be made at the earliest moment, especially in doubtful cases.

PRECAUTIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF A RESIDENT MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

With regard to Infectious Disease generally, I may say that living on the spot we are able to take immediate steps to isolate, caution and disinfect promptly, and this has doubtless helped to a great extent to lessen the number of cases and to keep down epidemics.

ISOLATION HOSPITAL.

I must here refer to the Isolation Hospital Scheme which I advocated last year in conjunction with other Boards, but I now see that the whole matter will require your very careful consideration or we may find ourselves involved in a very costly undertaking with fewer advantages than we anticipated. I still adhere to my opinion that the proposed site is a most desirable one for the purpose, being far removed from habitations, in a beautiful open country, and yet not too far from the district for the removal of the sick, but the main disadvantages from our point of view are that it may be years before we keep a constant supply of patients there ; that there is no proper water supply nearer than a mile-and-a-half, and that the lane leading to the site, called Kenton Lane, is in a deplorable condition and will require a considerable sum of money to be expended to put it into good order. Knowing these facts I cannot now urge you to embrace the proposed scheme.

FISH FACTORY AT ALPERTON.

In my last report you may also remember I drew attention to a threatening danger in Alperton in the manufacture of manure and oil from refuse fish from London, and stated that a watch would be kept on any who rendered the place insanitary in any way. On the 18th of June I received from your Clerk a copy of a memorial signed by a number of residents and ratepayers, complaining of the nuisance caused by the Fish Utilization Syndicate in carrying on their business at Alperton. I had no difficulty in reporting to you that the importation of fish offal at all times in the day and night, in insecurely fastened drums, which emitted an abominable stench, was a serious nuisance, and a source of danger to the public health, to say nothing of the effluvia arising from the manufacture of the manure at the factory. At the same time your Sanitary Inspector obtained a sample of the effluent from the factory to the Sewage Farm, and submitted same to the analyst, Dr. Rideal, who reported unfavourably to the Fish Syndicate. As a result of your opposition the promoters of this

business decided to close the factory, and only on rare occasions has work been done there, and then apparently only for a few hours for experimentation.

MR. HAYNES' IMPORTATION OF "ROUGH DUST" INTO ALPERTON.

Early in 1896 it was found that Mr. H. Haynes, of Alperton, was infringing an injunction obtained against him by the late Hendon Sanitary Authority in 1892, by importing what is known as *rough dust* into the middle of Alperton. Legal proceedings were instituted, and eventually the defendant undertook to cease the nuisance and to pay a penalty to the Council.

SEVERAL IMPORTANT POINTS IN RELATION TO MILK.

I desire now to refer as briefly as possible to several points in relation to milk.

It is well known that bacteria flourish and multiply abundantly in milk as we receive it, and that it may in a very short time contain as many as thirty millions of microbes per pint. It is now a generally accepted fact that the contagion of *scarlatina*, *typhoid* as well as *consumption* and tubercular affections generally are disseminated by milk.

The sources of contamination, such as a diseased tuberculous udder, impure water, dirty milkers, &c., are not so common in country districts as those nearer town, but they cannot be altogether eliminated at the best kept farms.

Gastric and intestinal disturbances, especially *summer diarrhœa* of infants, are undoubtedly very frequently due to the presence of certain fermenting organisms in milk which, favoured by the higher temperature of summer, multiply abundantly and elaborate products of a highly poisonous character.

Now our death-rate is affected by tuberculosis in its most fatal form, viz., consumption—a disease which may be unquestionably started by drinking milk from an unsuspected tuberculous cow. It is positively stated by those high in authority in health matters and by eminent surgeons, that *tuberculous glands of the neck, hip*

joint disease and tuberculous joint affections generally, are produced in a large number of cases by tuberculous milk.

Now the remedy is simply to *sterilize* by boiling the milk as soon as it enters the house, or, what is preferable, to *pasteurize*, a process which raises the temperature in a special apparatus high enough to destroy the noxious microbes, and yet not to in any way alter the character of the fluid. I venture to prophesy that in a few years it will be made compulsory on all milk distributors to sterilize by pasteurization all milk before it leaves the dairy. I am aware that many declare that boiling renders milk less palatable, but otherwise the theory that boiled or sterilized milk is either unwholesome, indigestible, or in any sense unfit for human consumption, has no foundation in fact.

Gentlemen, I think no one accepting the germ theory of disease will be surprised when, under favouring conditions, an apparently healthy young person, without family or hereditary taint, falls a victim to pulmonary phthisis ; one often sees and hears of such cases, and is quite at a loss to trace the origin of the infection.

I regard it as a duty we owe, especially to children, that we bring ourselves up to date in this matter, recognise the danger and cease to drink or allow others to partake of so-called pure milk, unboiled, which in a large number of cases is little else than a dust-laden, germ-swarmed fluid.

WATER SUPPLY TO DISTRICT.

The whole of the Wembley and Kingsbury Wards are supplied exclusively from the Colne Valley Water Company, in many respects an excellent water, but somewhat hard. At the Bushey works this water undergoes a process which renders it less hard. There is always a constant supply, and it may be taken unfiltered if drawn straight off the main. I make a point of this, as I am convinced that many people neglect to cleanse their cisterns—a proceeding which should be undertaken twice annually. While on the subject of water I should like to mention that there are only one or two filters that are of any use to the general public, indeed

the majority of carbon, sponge, iron, and other filters, are worse than useless, as they fail to arrest the passage of noxious organisms and certainly should be avoided by those going abroad. What I have stated in relation to the boiling of milk applies also to water, more particularly when one is doubtful of its source and purity.

STATE OF THE ROADS.

Last year I drew your attention to the condition of our roads—especially of Napier Road, Talbot Road, Alperton Park Road, the roads about Station Grove, and that part of the High Road for which the London and North-Western Railway is responsible.

The repair of the former roads, I am glad to hear, will be undertaken shortly. I think there can be no question that the damp condition of these roads is mainly responsible for the severe colds, croup and bronchitis so prevalent during the last winter.

With regard to the Railway Paths and Roads, I consider that, if possible, they have been more shamefully neglected than in former years, and I trust some means will be found to have them kept in better condition in the future.

Perhaps your engineer will be so good as to report to you some method for preventing the flooding of the fields opposite Abercorn Villas, Wembley. It seems to me that the water-course is quite inadequate for the rush of water during heavy rains.

DAIRIES, &c.

The dairies, cowsheds, slaughter-houses and bakehouses have been periodically inspected, and generally have been found in satisfactory condition.

PIGGERIES.

The many piggeries in the district have also been regularly visited, and improved at our suggestion. With your sanction seven prosecutions were undertaken, six of which were successful.

NUMBER OF VISITS.

During the year 1896, from the list I have received from your Sanitary Inspector, I see that, including mine, more than 800 sanitary visits have been made; these include visits to dairies, cowsheds and such places, drains examined and tested, sanitary and insanitary buildings visited, as well as 93 visits by the Inspector to canal boats.

SEWAGE FARM.

The vexed question of the Sewage Farm will be dealt with, I believe, by your engineer.

There is nothing else to which I need refer, except to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Whitehead, your Sanitary Inspector, for his co-operation and assistance at all times.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, gentlemen, I have to express my thanks for the courtesy and consideration extended to me during the past year by every member of the Council.

Yours faithfully and obediently,

CHARLES E. GODDARD,

Medical Officer of Health.